



**Montgomery County, MD
Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
January 13th, 2010**

Welcome and Approval of December Meeting Summary Minutes:

Mark Maxin, Chair, convened the meeting. Aaron Kaufman, Vice-Chair, motioned for the December Meeting Summary Minutes to be approved. John Miers, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the December Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written.

Presentation: "Overview of Glaucoma and Services Provided By the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind" – Dr. Marietta Dawson and Kim Alfonso, Senior Vice President, Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind
Kim Alfonso, Commissioner, has worked at Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB) for two years. CLB is dedicated to serving the blind and visually impaired population of the greater Washington region to help them overcome the challenges of vision loss. Their work enables people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired to remain active, independent and productive. CLB has been providing services for over 100 years. 60% of CLB staff is blind or visually impaired. They have offices in Silver Spring, Riverdale, and Washington, DC. Programs and services offered include:

- Assistive Technology (AT) Training and Consultation – CLB provides training in the latest voice synthesizers, "navigators", software, text enlargement, and Braille output devices.
- Braille Transcription, Translation, and Production in English and Spanish
- Employment Training and Career Placement Services – CLB works with employers to identify job and internship opportunities, provide job placement assistance, and serve as an information resource to employers. The Bridge to Work program is designed to help these veterans by providing access to job training and rehabilitation services that will allow them to successfully re-enter the workforce.
- Children's Programs – CLB provides services to children from birth through 12th grade. Programs include after-school activities, summer camps, children's events, and a support group for teens.
- Low Vision Care – CLB's Doctor of Optometry, who specializes in low vision, provides comprehensive evaluations and recommendations for aids and devices.
- Older Adult Services – CLB helps seniors learn to cope with and adjust to their vision loss through a program known as PRIDE (People Regaining Independence and Developing Experiences), which offers, among other things, in-home assessments and training, referrals to support groups, independent living skills instruction, mobility training, and Braille instruction.
- Rehabilitation and Counseling Services – CLB's rehabilitation services include independent living skills, mobility training, and Braille instruction. CLB's counseling services are provided to individuals and families as well as through support groups.
- Visionary Store – Offers products for independent living and low vision aids, such as magnifiers, Braille watches, and talking clocks that are designed for the visually impaired and blind.
- Government Contracts – CLB manages eight government contracts
- Volunteer Opportunities – CLB offers individuals and community groups the opportunity to volunteer in a number of ways, including readers and friendly visitors, Lighthouse Camp counselors, special events, and Phone-A-Friend.

Dr. Dawson gave an overview of glaucoma, an eye disorder that damages the nerve at the back of the eye (optic nerve), resulting in loss of eyesight, especially peripheral (side) vision. If glaucoma is not treated, loss of vision may continue and lead to blindness. One way to check for glaucoma is to test for eye pressure, which is normally in the range of 12mm and 22mm of mercury. Increased pressure inside the eye causes glaucoma. Unless this pressure is tested, and controlled, it can damage the optic nerve and

cause vision loss. Although many individuals do develop glaucoma with normal eye pressure so it is important that everyone have regular eye exams. Kim added that glaucoma affects all ages. CLB provides low vision evaluations at three clinics. They accept Medicare and work with insurance companies, and hope to accept Maryland and DC Medicaid in the future. For more information, call 240-737-5100 (V) or visit www.clb.org. Betsy Luecking, Staff, added that CLB is one of many contractors with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Disability Services.

Commission Structure: Follow up on Annual Retreat and Development of Work Plan and Workgroups

Mark Maxin and Aaron Kaufman led a discussion on how the commissioners wanted to organize their work. Possible committees include Housing, Health, Transportation, Employment, and Communication. Advocacy and access should be a part of every committee or workgroup, not a separate committee with that title as the general public does not know what that means or to what and for what. The discussion was tabled until the Steering Committee Meeting on Wednesday, January 20th.

Update from the Chair:

Bill 46-09: Personnel – Regulations – Persons with Disabilities – Hiring Preference

Mark Maxin, Chair, discussed the public hearing for this bill that was held on Tuesday, January 12th before the County Council. 18 people testified in support of the bill; none testified against it. Mark will be meeting with the County Attorney's office in early February to discuss regulations. Aaron Kaufman, Vice-Chair, noted that the Charter Review Commission (CRC) is not opposed to the Bill, but they are skeptical. Mark is meeting with the CRC on February 10th at 8:30am to discuss Schedule A. He asked for Charlie Crawford, Commissioner, and Trish Gallalee, Commissioner, to attend the meeting as well to discuss their experiences with Schedule A hiring and how effective the program is. Paul Meyer went on record as not supporting a mandate that a preference be mandatory unless there would be an exception procedure. He is very supportive of increased employment opportunities, but recommends that management concerns be considered.

Workgroup Announcements: None

Roundtable:

Steven Riley, Commissioner, reported that the "2nd Annual Conference on Faith, Deafness, and Disabilities: Creating Communities Where All Are Welcome" will be held on February 13th. The conference will include presentations and workshops on creating program opportunities in the community and area parishes, and workshops on Residential Opportunities and Legal and Financial Planning for Special Needs Families. It is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington, and co-sponsored by Catholic Charities, Potomac Community Resources, Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind, and Deaf-Reach.

Sharon Freiman, Commissioner, reported that there will be a public hearing on the proposed RideOn Bus route cuts and reductions on February 1st at 6:30pm in the EOB Cafeteria. A motion was made for the Transportation committee to investigate the proposed cuts and to suggest the Commission's advocacy position. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously passed. Mark asked Paul Meyer to draft the testimony on the proposed Ride On cuts and reductions. Judy Hanger, Ex-Officio Member, Department of Transportation, also noted that effective Friday, January 8th, 2010, the Call 'N' Ride program was no longer accepting new applications. It is proposed for February 1st, 2010, that current participants can only purchase one book of coupons per month instead of two. Aaron Kaufman, Vice-Chair, made a motion to oppose the cuts. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved. Paul Meyer was asked to write testimony on behalf of the Commission regarding the Call 'N' Ride cuts.

Jackie Simon asked Betsy to obtain a list of all County contractors with Aging and Disability Services.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm

Next Full Commission Meeting: Wednesday, February 10th, 2010 – EOB, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD - Lobby Auditorium, 6:30pm to 8:00pm

Steering Committee Meeting: Wednesday, February 17th, 2010 - 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD, 1st Floor Tan Conference Room, 5:30pm to 7:00pm

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Office Services Coordinator
Betsy Luecking, Disability Policy Specialist